DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 071 748 PS 006 290

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TITLE	Abbreviated Version of the 1971-72 Final Evaluation Report. Preschool for Urban Children Project.
INSTITUTION	Educational Testing Service, Princeton, N.J.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	Jul 72
NOTE	15p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS	Data Analysis; *Evaluation Techniques; *Parent Participation; *Preschool Education; Projects; Social Work; Test Results; *Tests; *Urban Education
IDENTIFIERS	*Sesame Street

ABSTRACT

A project designed to serve two purposes in serving urban children is described. The purposes are: (1) to provide preschool education based on Sesame Street viewing, and (2) to provide an experimental framework to evaluate three possible approaches of parental involvement which might further enhance the gains of children viewing Sesame Street. The project consists of three study components, each representing a different method of parent involvement. Six viewing centers were established--two centers per component. The two centers in Component I have a program utilizing "parents in the school setting." "Parents with social work aide service" are enrolled in the centers of Component II. Component III is a home base project, in which the centers serve only as central meeting and resource areas. This report documents the activities of the Preschool for Urban Project during its first operational year. The participants in all three study components consisted of parent-child pairs. All data analyses are based upon those children and parents for whom both pretest and posttest data were available and acceptable. (CK)

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ABBREVIATED VERSION OF THE 1971-72 FINAL EVALUATION REPORT PRESCHOOL FOR URBAN CHILDREN PROJECT

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OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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July 1972

EDUCATIONAL TESTING SERVICE
PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY

ED 071748

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1971-72 FINAL EVALUATION REPORT

PRESCHOOL FOR URBAN CHILDREN PROJECT

(Abbreviated Version)

Historical Background and Program Description

During the fall of 1969 the widely acclaimed television show, Sesame Street, was introduced and subsequently became one of the most talked about innovations in preschool education. Parents reported that their children were indeed learning their "letters" and "numbers" as well as a variety of other concepts. Initial research evaluation efforts conducted by Educational Testing Service confirmed the fact that children viewing Sesame Street made gains in the show's goal areas not made by their nonviewing counterparts. Subsequently, parents and educators became interested in ways to further enhance these gains.

With Title III funding, the Minneapolis Board of Education proposed the Preschool for Urban Children Project; this project was designed to serve two purposes--1) to provide preschool education based on Sesame Street viewing, and 2) to provide an experimental framework to evaluate three possible approaches of parental involvement which might further enhance the gains of children viewing Sesame Street.

The project consists of three study components. Each component represents a different method of parental involvement. Six viewing centers were established--two centers per component. The two centers in Component I have a program utilizing "parents in the school setting." Each child is accompanied to school in the morning by a parent or family members. These parents serve as classroom aides under the supervision of a teacher. With their child they have breakfast, view Sesame Street, work on follow-up materials, and occasionally take field trips.

"Parents with social work aide service" are enrolled in the centers of Component II. As in Component I, the children view Sesame Street daily at the centers, participate in follow-up activities and field trips, and are served a breakfast. Their parents, however, do not serve as classroom aides. Instead, they meet together weekly; their primary means of communications about home follow-up experiences is through frequent contact with a social worker or aide.

Component III is a home based project. The centers serve only as central meeting and resource areas. "Parental involvement in the individual home" attempts to develop a "parental teaching style." The parents and their children view Sesame Street together, and the parents attend weekly meetings to learn about appropriate follow-up activities and materials. The centers in this component, as in Components I and II, do however provide the children with field trip experiences and additional support services involving health care.

This report documents the activities of the Preschool for Urban Children Project during its first operational year, July 1971-June 1972. The project proposal was accepted in the summer of 1971. During the late summer and early fall the centers were designated, staffed and equipped. Children were selected and pretested in October and all components were operational at the beginning of the Sesame Street program year in November. Project activities continued until early June with posttesting occurring at the end of May.

Participants

The participants in all three study components consisted of parent-child pairs. The project proposal specified that each viewing center would have a maximum enrollment of 17 children participating with their parents. As with any on-going project of this nature, enrollment decreased over the first operational year; new participants were not selected to replace the original children and parents as they left the program. Therefore, all of the participants were selected in the fall of 1971. The pretest instruments were then administered to the children and parents. Attendance data continued to monitor enrollment during the year. All data analyses in this final report are based upon those children and parents for whom both pretest and posttest data were available and acceptable. Table 1 presents a descriptive categorization of these study children.

Table 1

Descriptive Categorization of All Children for Whom Complete and Acceptable Matched Pre- and Posttest Data were Obtained

	Total	Component I		Component II		Component III	
		Adams	Harrison	Greeley	Hawthorne	Clinton	Willard
	N=79	N=15	N=11	N=15	N=19	N=10	N=9
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Sex:							
Male	54.4	53.3	45.5	60.0	63.2	70.0	22.2
Female	45.6	46.7	54.5	40.0	36.8	30.0	77.8
Predominant Language spoken in home:							
English	97.5	93.3	100.00	93.3	100.0	100.0	100.0
Spanish	--	--	--	--	--	--	--
Other	2.5	6.7	--	6.7	--	--	--
Population Group:							
Black	10.3	6.7	27.3	--	5.3	--	33.3
Spanish	1.3	--	--	--	5.3	--	--
White	65.4	60.0	36.4	60.0	84.2	70.0	66.7
Other	23.1	33.3	36.4	40.0	5.3	30.0	--

Personnel

This project consisted of a limited number of professional staff who provided administrative, instructional and support services. The project director had one secretary; they were the only administrative staff members. The instructional team consisted of five teachers, two at each center in Components I and II, and one teacher for both Component III centers. One part-time nurse, two social workers, six social work aides, and four teacher-aides provided support services. Others on the budgeted staff included all Component I and III parents who were paid on the basis of their attendance and participation as "teacher-aides." Component II parents were not part of the paid staff since their children attended the centers alone; their "day care" was considered to be compensation in lieu of actual cash payment. However, because of the Component II parent involvement in home follow-up activities, they would certainly be considered staff "teacher aides."

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Physical Arrangements

Through school decentralization, the Minneapolis schools are grouped in two "pyramids" of geographically related schools. The Preschool for Urban Children project took advantage of this pyramid structure in locating the viewing centers. Each study component consisted of two such centers: one center in the North Pyramid and one in the South Pyramid. The centers were located in elementary school buildings with the study families coming from the same elementary district as the schools's pupils. Component I centers were located at Adams and Harrison schools, Component II centers were at Greeley and Hawthorne schools, and Clinton and Willard were the sites of Component III centers.

Component I centers had two rooms allocated to them; one room was for the children to meet and view Sesame Street and one was for the parents' daily meetings. Centers for Component II had a room for child viewing and follow-up activities. Component III centers had a room for parents' meetings and administrative activities. The children's rooms were equipped with television sets, play materials, and tables and chairs; they appear similar to a typical nursery school setting.

Summary

This report covers the first year of a proposed three-year demonstration project, titled Preschool for Urban Children. Funded by Title III, ESEA, the project served 97 children. This project was developed to examine which of three alternatives stimulated the greatest gains in achievement for children viewing the television show Sesame Street. Three project components reflect the varying instructional approaches: "parents in the school setting," "parents with social work aide service," and "parent involvement in the individual home."

The study children were enrolled in six viewing centers. Two centers comprised each of the study components. All of the components had an achievement objective which specified that children enrolled during the first year would gain 25 percent in raw score between pre- and posttest administrations. In addition, specific attendance and instructional goals were specified by component. The evaluation of goal attainment in these areas is reported for each component separately.

Five Sesame Street Cognitive Tests (Letters, Numbers, Relational Terms, Sorting Skills, and Classification Skills) were the major assessment instruments used for the evaluation of child achievement; for purposes of score reporting this battery of tests

was divided into 25 subtests. Complete analyses of data were possible for only 79 children for whom acceptable pretest and posttest data was obtained. Achievement gains for all children combined showed that they gained more than 25 percent in raw score between pre- and posttesting on 23 of the 25 subtests. Data analyses by component reflect similar raw score gains. Component I, however, had lower pretest scores on 17 subtests but had higher gain scores than either Components II or III on 12 subtests. In addition, Component I met the project product goal requiring a 25 percent or greater gain on 23 of the subtests; Components II and III met the objective on 22 subtests. Other results showed that girls had slightly higher pretest, posttest and gain scores; children with a high attendance rate had higher gains on 19 of the subtests; and those who dropped the program after an average of 3.9 months, only met the product objective with a 25 percent or greater gain on 16 of the subtests with the amount of gain on these subtests not as great as the gain achieved by those who remained in the program. Further analyses using data from subsequent project years will be necessary to discover if these initial differences are substantiated.

Other project goals for attendance and instruction are specific to each component, although similarities in the objectives exist. Parent attendance data showed that no component had parents meeting this objective; this goal, however was set unrealistically high and has been modified for the second project year. Component I had the highest rate of parent attendance with 41.4 percent of the parents attending 90 percent or more of the scheduled meetings. A

95 percent attendance rate was attained by 13.8 percent of Component I parents who attended the viewing centers daily with their children. Similarly, neither Components I or II met their objectives requiring the parents to work on follow-up materials with their children a specified amount of time. However, Component III parent reaction to developing a "parental teaching style" more than met the objective specifying an average rating of at least 3 on a 5 point scale: the average rating at mid-year was 4.4 and it was again 4.4 at the conclusion of the year. Evaluation records also showed that breakfasts were provided as specified to all Component I and II children wanting breakfast. The project nurse also provided complete health care including extensive follow-up activities where necessary.

Recognizing the difficulties in initiating any project of this kind, the evaluator feels that the Preschool for Urban Children Project has had a good beginning. Although most of the process objectives were not met, this cannot be the final measure of success, especially during the first operational year. The project was implemented as designed and presented in the project proposal. In spite of the constraints of time and inexperience the major product goal for child cognitive achievement was met (with the exception of two minor subtests). It is felt that the project staff acted with integrity for the good of the project and most importantly for the good of the parents and children they were serving.

With these comments in mind the following recommendations are offered:

All project staff positions should be filled by the end of August.

All parent-child recruitment should be completed by the end of September.

All centers should be operational by mid-October.

Efforts should be made to explore ways of increasing the parent attendance rate.

More extensive and timely use should be made of appropriate follow-up materials.

The weekly staff communication conferences should be continued.

Table 2

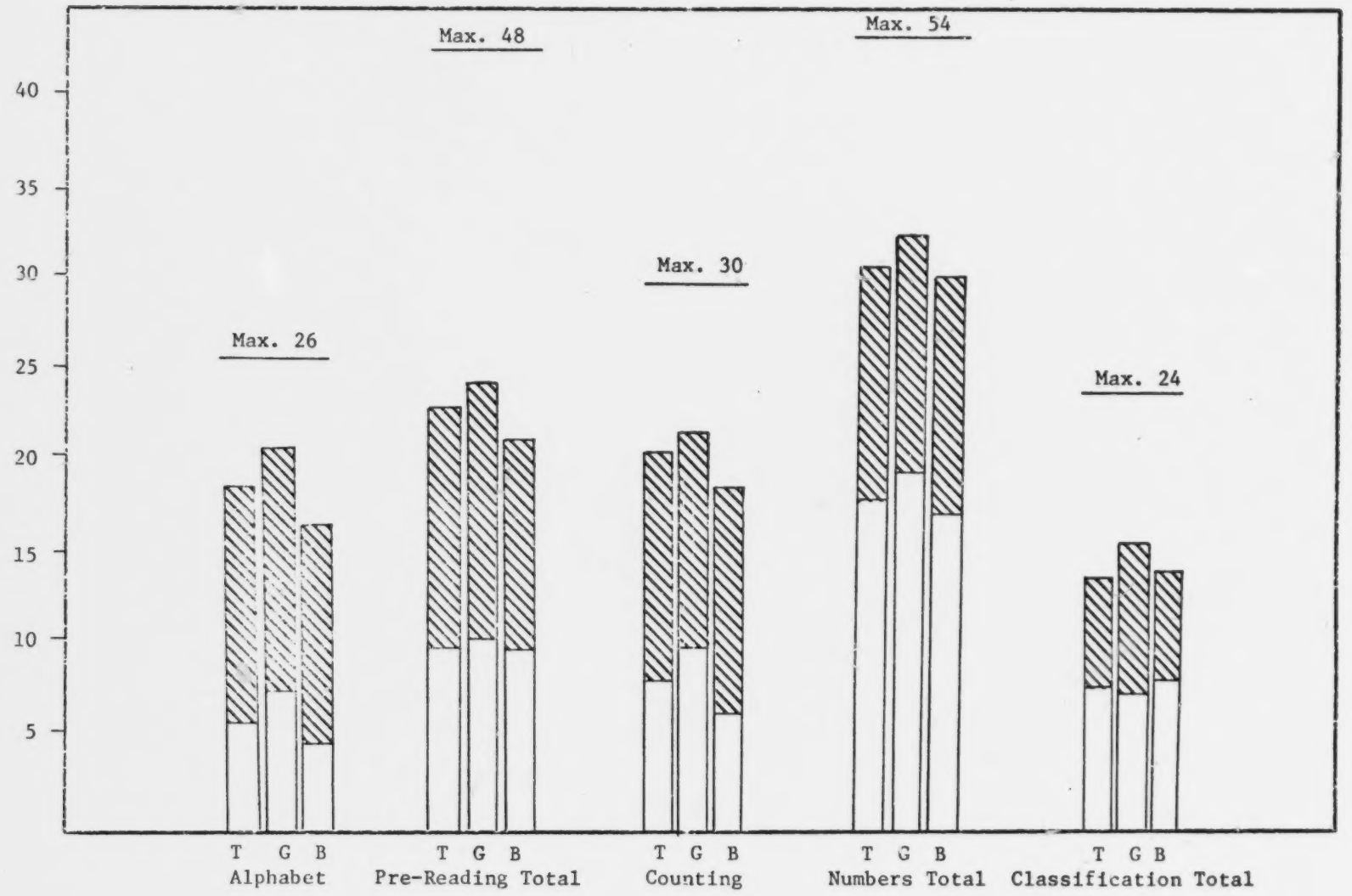
Mean Posttest and Gain Scores for All Children for Whom Complete and Acceptable Matched Pre- and Posttest Data were Obtained
(N=79)

Subscores	Mean Posttest Score	Mean Gain Score	S.D.	Level of Gain*
1 = LETTERS TEST MATCHING BY FORM, RANGE = 0 - 9	6.32	1.33	1.85	++
2 = LETTERS TEST MATCHING BY POSITION, RANGE = 0 - 3	1.54	0.43	1.06	++
3 = LETTERS TEST RECOGNIZING LETTERS, RANGE = 0 - 4	3.13	1.75	1.49	++
4 = LETTERS TEST NAMING LETTERS, RANGE = 0 - 8	5.61	4.78	2.96	++
5 = LETTERS TEST LETTER SOUNDS, RANGE = 0 - 4	1.65	1.48	1.46	++
6 = LETTERS TEST INITIAL SOUNDS, RANGE = 0 - 6	1.89	1.32	2.07	++
7 = LETTERS TEST DECODING, RANGE = 0 - 8	2.35	0.90	1.39	++
8 = LETTERS TEST READING, RANGE = 0 - 9	2.54	1.34	1.81	++
9 = LETTERS TEST LEFT-RIGHT, RANGE = 0 - 4	2.28	0.86	1.54	++
10 = LETTERS TEST ALPHABET, RANGE = 0 - 26	18.28	12.46	10.02	++
11 = LETTERS TEST PRE-READING TOTAL, RANGE = 0 - 48	22.75	13.11	7.43	++
12 = NUMBERS TEST RECOGNIZING NUMBERS, RANGE = 0 - 4	2.76	1.51	1.34	++
13 = NUMBERS TEST NAMING NUMBERS, RANGE = 0 - 6	2.61	2.24	1.89	++
14 = NUMBERS TEST ENUMERATION, RANGE = 0 - 7	5.84	1.99	1.55	++
15 = NUMBERS TEST CONSERVATION, RANGE = 0 - 7	3.47	0.70	1.57	++
16 = NUMBERS TEST COUNTING STRATEGIES, RANGE = 0 - 8	6.04	1.01	2.20	+
17 = NUMBERS TEST NUMBER AND NUMERAL CORRESPONDENCE, RANGE = 0 - 3	2.14	1.13	1.15	++
18 = NUMBERS TEST ADDITION AND SUBTRACTION, RANGE = 0 - 13	3.81	1.94	1.63	++
19 = NUMBERS TEST COUNTING, RANGE = 0 - 30	20.08	12.63	7.83	++
20 = NUMBERS TEST TOTAL, RANGE = 0 - 54	30.87	12.44	5.52	++
21 = RELATIONS TEST TOTAL, RANGE = 0 - 8	6.14	0.82	1.76	+
22 = CLASSIFICATION SKILLS CLASSIFICATION, RANGE = 0 - 15	10.89	5.06	3.06	++
23 = CLASSIFICATION SKILLS DOUBLE CLASSIFICATION, RANGE = 0 - 9	3.92	1.04	1.83	++
24 = CLASSIFICATION SKILLS TOTAL, RANGE = 0 - 24	14.81	6.10	3.60	++
25 = SORTING SKILLS TOTAL, RANGE = 0 - 16	9.30	4.22	2.94	++

*Level of gain: ++ indicates a gain of 25 percent or more, and + indicates a gain of 15 to 25 percent.

Figure 1

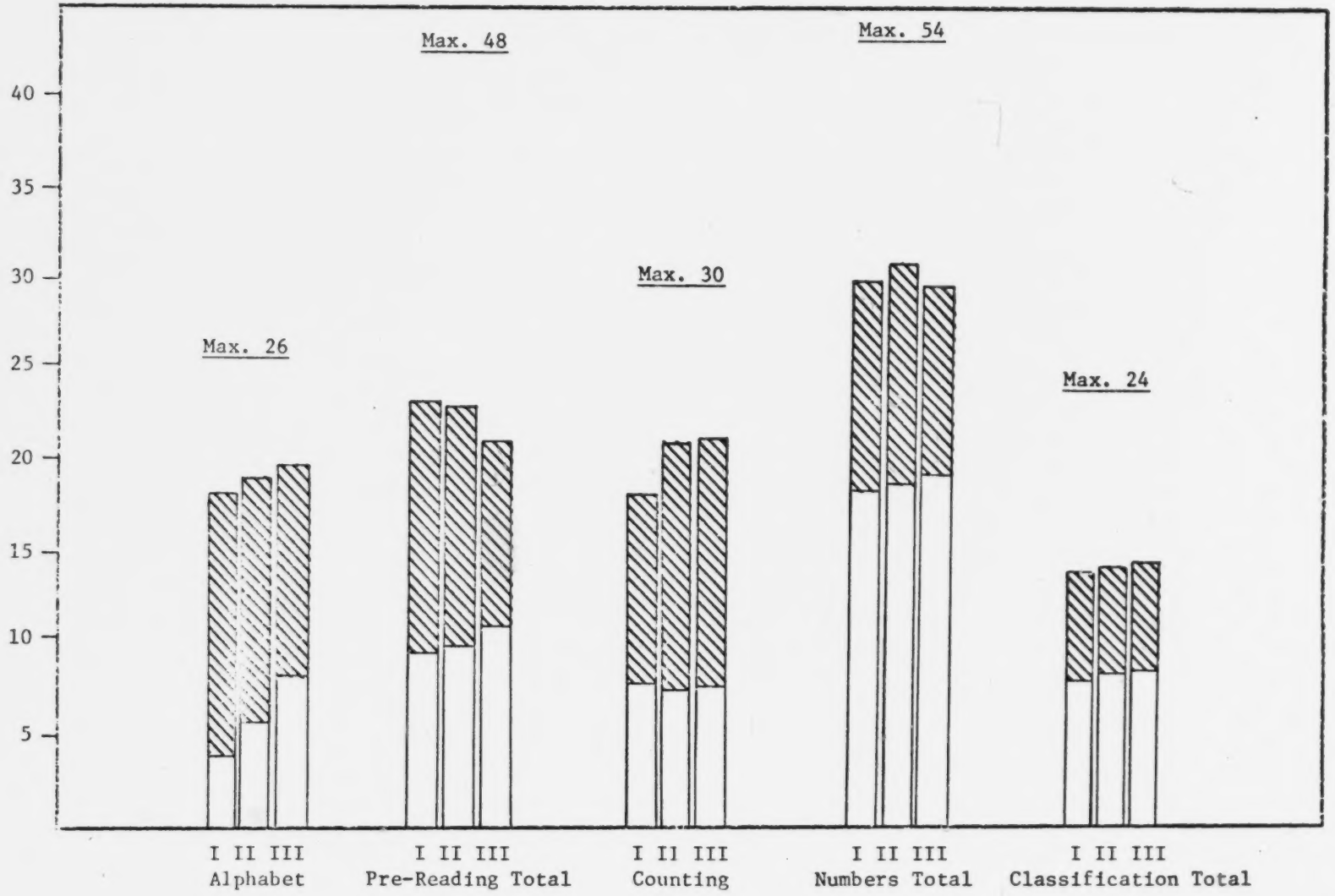
Selected Pretest and Gain Scores for Children by Total Group and by Sex



T: Total (N = 79)
G: Girls (N = 36)
B: Boys (N = 43)

Figure 2

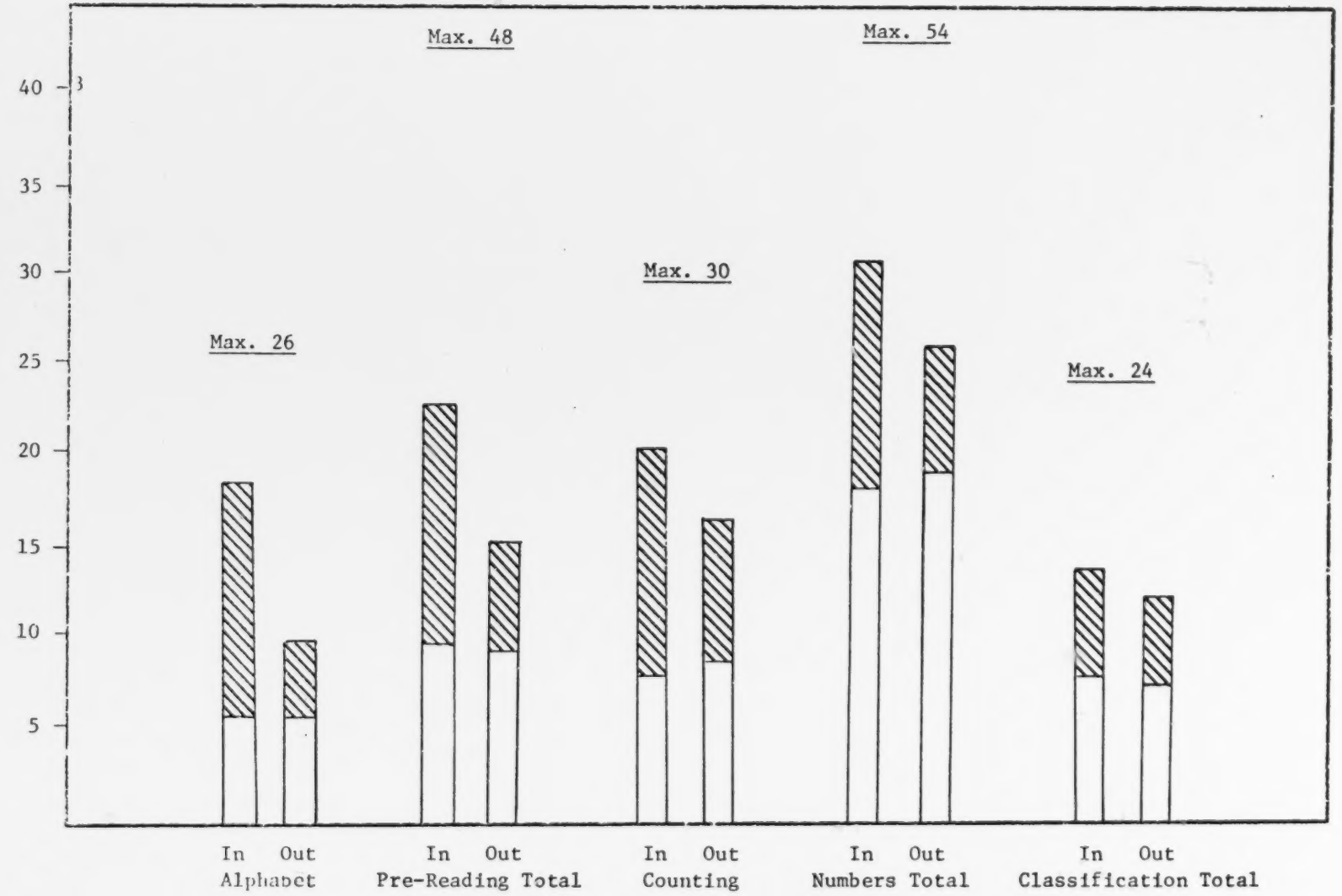
Selected Pretest and Gain Scores for Children by Component



I: Component I (N = 26)
II: Component II (N = 34)
III: Component III (N = 19)

Figure 3

Selected Pretest and Gain Scores for Children in Program on May 15, 1972
Versus Those Children who Dropped the Program Prior to May 15, 1972



In: In program on May 15, 1972 (N = 79)
Out: Out of program prior to May 15, 1972 (N = 11)